

# Examining Our Options for the 80s

Those who attended ACRL's Second National Conference in Minneapolis were treated to a rare smorgasbord of research, observation, and speculation on the future of academic and research librarianship. From the continuing education courses through the theme speakers and contributed papers to the concluding panel discussion, conference participants took a long, cool look at the challenges facing the profession in the 1980s.

Nearly 1,900 librarians and friends from Canada, Australia, France, Jamaica, and every state except Idaho attended the conference last October 1-4. All rooms in the conference hotels (the Hyatt Regency and the Holiday Inn) were filled, and the hotel lobbies and restaurants became forums for the informal exchange of ideas and information.

Virgil F. Massman, chair of the Conference Executive Committee, was pleased with the number of registrants. "With the economy tightening academic travel budgets, I was concerned that the turnout might be low," he said. "But the Minneapolis-St. Paul area has a very good reputation nationally as a pleasant conference site, and its central location provided librarians on both coasts with an equal chance to attend."

The conference theme, "Options for the 80s," was highlighted by five theme speakers who offered their views on the future of libraries. Thomas P. Melady, Assistant Secretary of Education for Higher Education, outlined the future federal role between government and higher education. The Reagan Administration, according to Melady, has five major goals in its higher education policy: reducing regulations and paperwork; restoring quality to post-secondary education; ensuring equality of access to appropriate institutions of higher learning; supporting the historically black colleges; and expanding and improving foreign language and area studies. Outside these areas there will be some withdrawal of federal support ("creative retrenchment") and an increased reliance on state, local, and private funding. "The economy will be re-vitalized," he said, "inflation lessened, and the overhead in education will be reduced."

Theme speaker Robert Rosenweig, vice president of Stanford University, commented on the direction that research universities might take in the next decade. Recognizing that it is "almost impossible to avoid unpleasant surprises," he felt that a basic re-assessment of the mission of the

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Virgil F. Massman,  
Chair of the  
National Conference  
Executive  
Committee, cuts the  
ribbon at the  
Exhibits Opening  
Reception as Julie  
Virgo, ACRL  
Executive Director,  
looks on.

American research universities will allow educators and librarians to weather stormy times ahead. Testimony to a continued, though changed, government/research university corolliance, Rosenweig said, is to be found in the fact that "in the midst of the largest proposed budget reductions in our history, university-based research support in the aggregate was uncut in real dollars." The federal government will con-

tinue to be the university's chief client, but over-dependence on their support must be replaced with a *realpolitik* understanding of the contingency of federal commitments.

One pressure that economic stress will have on the liberal arts college, according to Daniel Sullivan, vice president for planning at Carleton College, is a tendency to become homogeneous. Ways of resisting this pressure and ensuring their



Wayne Cardillo,  
University of Kansas  
Law Library,  
inspects the Book  
House exhibit.



*Keith Russell, Council on Library Resources, presents his CE course on career advancement.*

survival, Sullivan said, are for colleges and their libraries (who may well take a disproportionate share of budget cutting) to "undertake honest analyses of their strengths and weaknesses relative to the competition; analyze the availability of alternative markets; explore alternative products; and pursue needed capital aggressively."

The next speaker was Paul A. Lacey, professor of English at Earlham College, who turned away from the problems of finance and examined the options that the New Technology will present to libraries in the 1980s. Although basically supportive of such services as bibliographic databases, as a Luddite who has "really only accepted the radio fully" Lacey predicted the dehumanization of libraries if dependence on information tools is overstressed to the detriment of the library's primary role as a clearinghouse for research and education. He cautioned against letting the choice of research topics and the method of studying them be determined by equipment which cannot always offer users everything that a more traditional system provides—browsability, for example. "Every research project," he said, "needs something to give it human scale. Approaching a database through programs which are not 'user-friendly' is far more daunting than asking a librarian for help in a strange new area."

Beverly P. Lynch, director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Library, saw the future as a series of choices to be made in response to continuing change—change sometimes so subtle that it is noticed only in retrospect. Making the right choice, she explained, is dependent on the ability of library schools to train future librarians

to have the courage and foresight to find answers.

The panel discussion which was held the last day of the conference summarized the five presentations and identified the challenges that librarians will face in the coming decade. Panel members were David Weber, Stanford University, acting as panel moderator; Marcia J. Myers, Miami-Dade County College, representing community and junior college libraries; Kenneth G. Peterson, Southern Illinois University, representing university libraries; and Thomas G. Kirk, Berea College, representing college libraries.

The panel chose six issues that academic libraries must confront in the years ahead: the impact of shifts in the audience for higher education; relationships with government at all levels; contrasting views on financial support; contrasting views on educational programs as they affect libraries; contrasting views on educational values; and changes in libraries themselves. More than just a recap of the previous talks, the panel discussion was a fitting and well-prepared finale to the Options for the 80s theme.

Cassette tapes of the theme addresses, the panel discussion, and all 56 of the contributed papers may be ordered from Minute Tape, 14411 Vose Street, Suite 30C, Van Nuys, CA 91405. A complete set costs \$249, but individual tapes are available for \$8.95 (plus a \$3.50 handling fee added to the total order).

The theme addresses will be reprinted in an upcoming issue of *College & Research Libraries*, and the complete proceedings of the conference will be published next spring by JAI Press.

Hal Esop, ACRL conference and exhibits man-



*Theme speaker Thomas Melady explains the Reagan Administration's higher education policy.*



*Luddite Paul Lacey describes his views on the New Technology.*



*Panelists, left to right: Kenneth G. Peterson, Thomas Kirk, Marcia J. Myers, David C. Weber.*



*The Moldy Figs, a local dixieland jazz band, perform at the Minneapolis Public Library reception.*



*Molly O'Hara, University of Illinois-Chicago Circle, presents her paper on temporary employment in academic libraries.*



*Theme speaker Robert Rosenzweig discusses the future of research libraries with ACRL President David C. Weber.*

ager, commented, "Through the success of its Second National Conference ACRL has shown once again that ALA divisional membership can meet in a non-business forum to discuss in detail the pressing professional issues of the day. By meeting in Minneapolis, ACRL has continued to provide its members around the country with quality programming and an opportunity for professional socialization and development."

Looking towards the Third National Conference on April 4-7, 1984, in Seattle, ACRL will bring to the country's western regions what it already has to members in the midwest and east. We hope you will join us as we anticipate 1984. ■■

## CE COURSE REPORT

"A very stimulating presentation and an excellent example of teaching."

"Very good, brilliant and conscientious instructors."

"A most informative and extremely timely experience for me."

"4 stars! Superior+."

The preceding remarks, taken from course evaluations, are typical of the overwhelmingly positive response to the eight continuing education courses offered by ACRL on September 29-October 1, prior to the National Conference in Minneapolis. Approximately 114 academic and public librarians enrolled in the courses, which ranged in length from one to three days. Many of the participants took advantage of the scheduling opportunities, enrolling in two courses.

"Effective Supervisory Skills" taught by Herbert S. White, of Indiana University, provided an introduction to techniques for effective supervision such as evaluating progress, determining and scheduling completion dates, and maintaining an interim report system. White's lively presentation was enthusiastically received by course participants.

Suzanne H. Mahmoodi of the Office of Public Libraries and Interlibrary Cooperation for the State of Minnesota presented a general background in basic principles and research findings in group behavior in "Working Effectively with Groups." The course was structured around active group work, allowing participants firsthand experience in group dynamics.

Administrators of small and medium-sized academic libraries received information regarding managerial considerations essential in establishing the successful bibliographic instruction program. Taught by Dennis E. Robinson, University of Richmond, "Establishing the College Bibliographic Instruction Program: The Director's Role" examined political aspects as well as the staff, budgetary, faculty, and administrative support necessary for establishing a workable BI program.

"An Introduction to Maps in Libraries: Maps as Information Tools" provided for the nonspecialist an explanation of the information potential of maps in the library environment. Charles Seavey (University of New Mexico) and David Cobb (University of Illinois) used a number of effective instructional approaches to illustrate the role of maps in acquisitions, collection development, reference, and instruction, as well as the space and equipment requirements of maps.

The most popular of the courses was "Teaching Methods for the Bibliographic Instruction Librarian." Marilla Svinicki of the University of Texas at Austin's Center for Teaching Effectiveness involved the 34 participants in a number of creative exercises illustrating a basic review and practice in learning theory and instructional methods particularly effective in the bibliographic instruction situation.

Richard W. Boss, Senior Consultant for Information Systems Consultants, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, supplied participants in his course, "Management Issues in Automation and Information Technology," with an overview of library and information technology. He emphasized administrative, economic, political, and other nontechnical aspects of selecting, procuring and using these technologies.

Participants in "Writing the Journal Article and Getting it Published" received an overview of the publishing process. Instructor Richard D. Johnson of SUNY-Oneonta covered such topics as selection of a publishing medium, preparation of the manuscript, submission of the manuscript, and pre- and post-publication matters and helped participants devise an effective strategy for publishing their work.

Keith W. Russell, Council on Library Resources, led an enthusiastic group through a number of practical self-assessment and job-hunting techniques relevant to career development and growth in the academic library environment in his course, "Career Advancement in Academic Librarianship: Techniques for Upward Mobility." Small-group activities and creative exercises highlighted this carefully planned course.

Three ACRL-owned CE courses made their debut in Minneapolis. Materials can be purchased from ACRL Headquarters for "Establishing the College Bibliographic Instruction Program: The Director's Role," "Teaching Methods for the Bibliographic Instruction Librarian," and "Writing the Journal Article and Getting it Published" (\$15 for members, \$20 for non-members).

In addition to course content, participants were pleased by the size of the courses, which were small enough to allow for maximum interaction between instructors and students. Participants were given the opportunity to suggest ideas for future ACRL courses.—C. Brigid Welch. ■■